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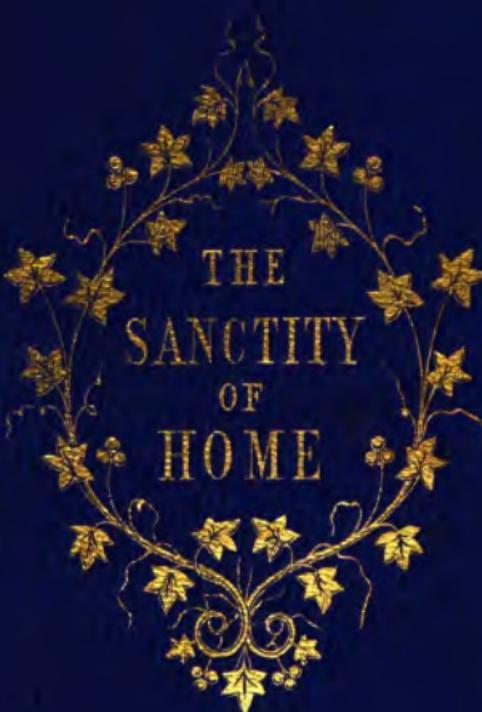
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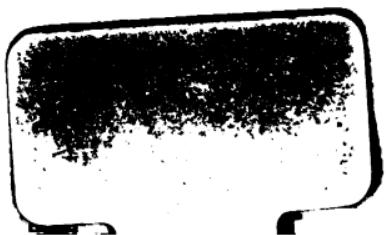
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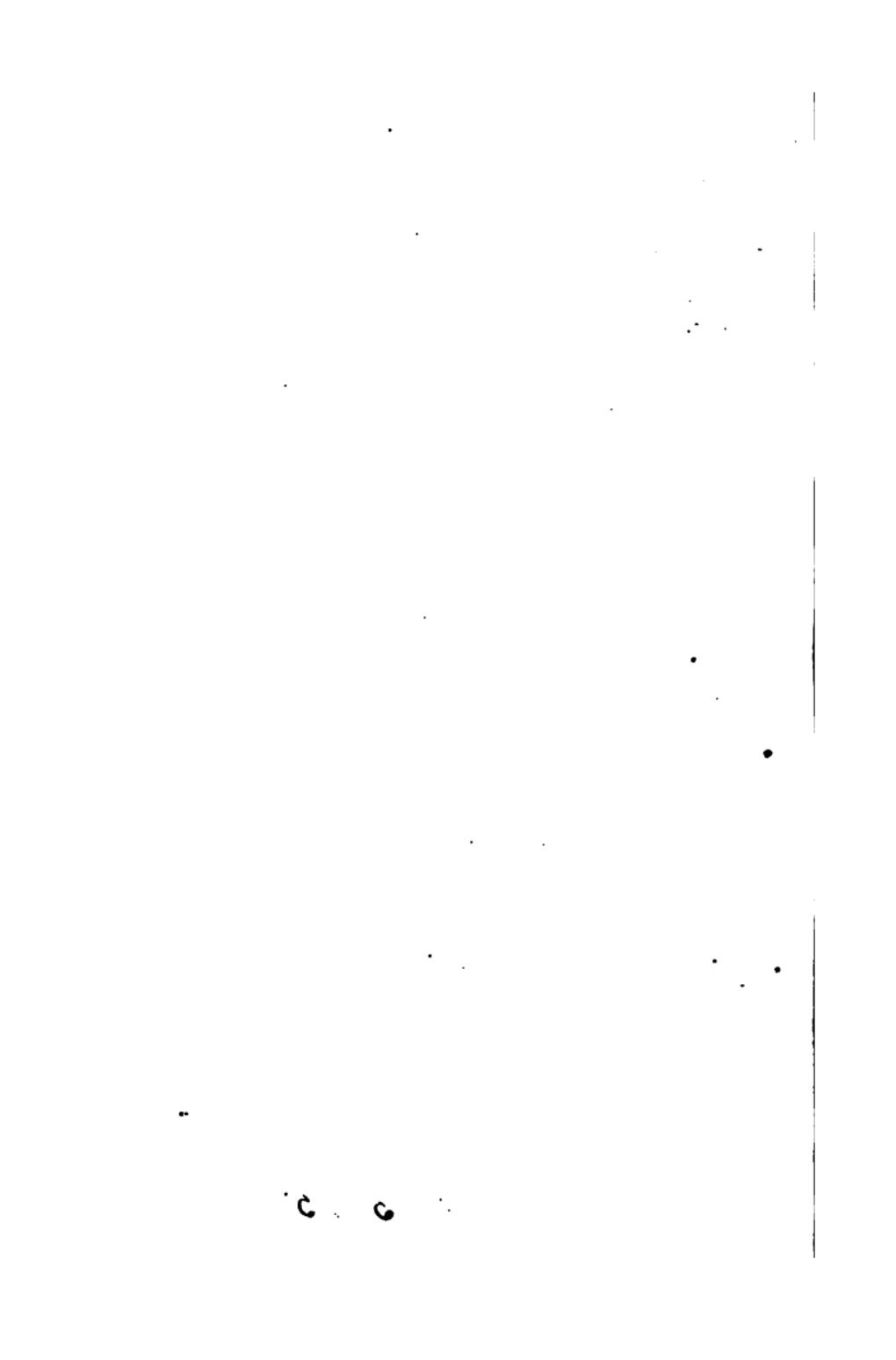
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THE
SANCTITY
OF
HOME







THE SANCTITY OF HOME:

BEING WORDS OF COUNSEL AND INCITEMENT TO
CHRISTIAN FATHERS AND MOTHERS.

BY THE

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MINISTER OF ST. PETERS, DUNDEE.

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TO THE

Members of the Kirk-Session of St Peter's Free Church,

DUNDEE,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES, PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

ARE INSCRIBED, BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE

FRIEND AND PASTOR,

THE AUTHOR.

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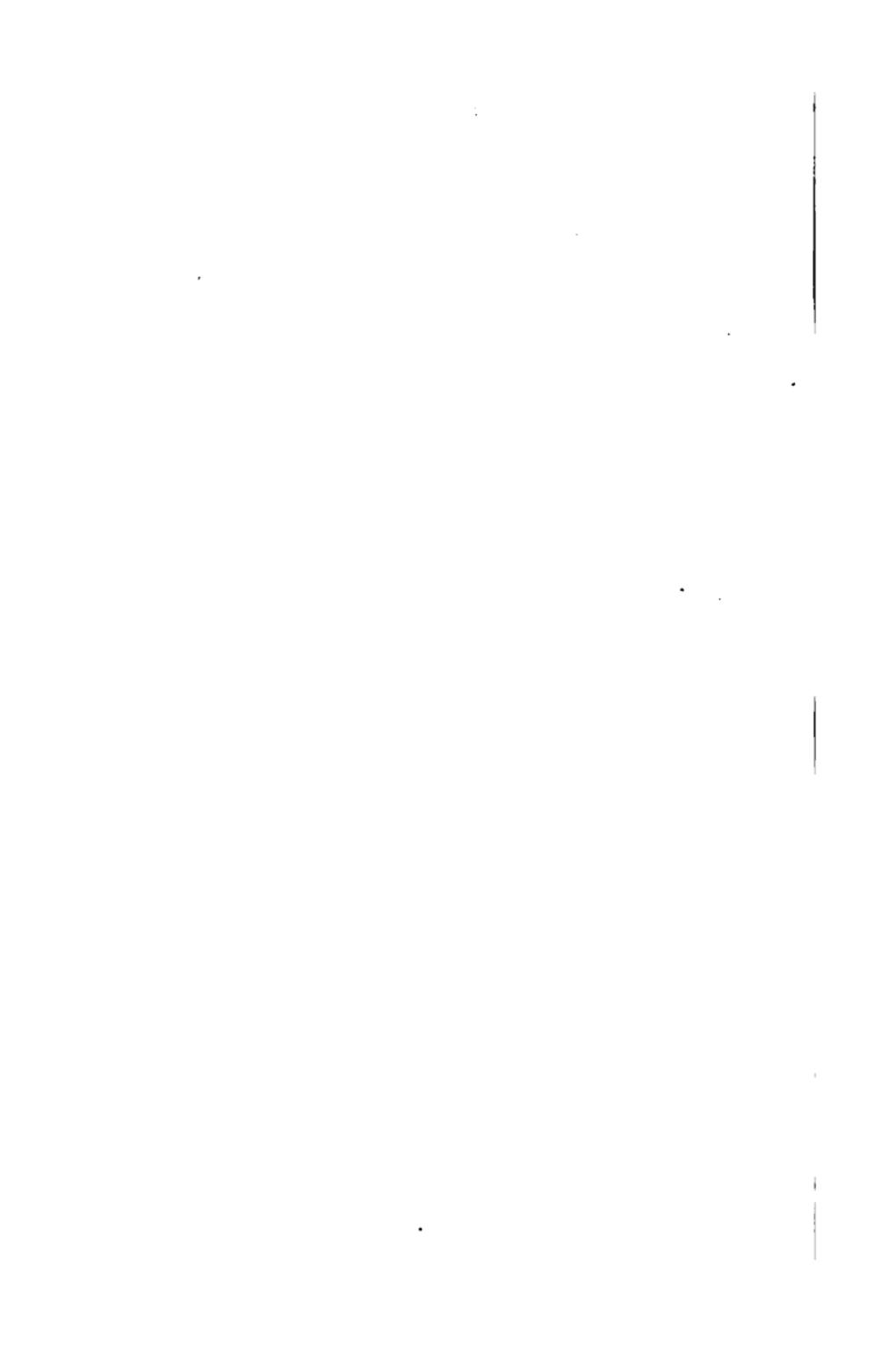
P R E F A C E.

THE earnest request of many friends, to whom the substance of the following chapters was addressed in another form, would not have induced the author to commit them to the press, were he not deeply impressed with the vital importance of the subject to which they refer, and were there not some things in regard to it which he could wish to speak in the ears of a wider circle. He believes in "the sanctity of home" in the fullest sense. He regards the family order as a most sacred ordinance of God, destined to subserve the highest ends, and fraught with the most precious and far-reaching blessings for the Church and for the world. While everything else in the

social system is insecure, this alone seems firm and permanent. Amid a thousand influences for evil, this remains as a perennial well-spring of blessing. And yet, while the healing and binding influences of the family are more than ever needed, there seems in our day a peculiar danger of its vitality and power sinking into decay; and never was an earnest word in its behalf more eminently seasonable. Much of what these pages contains has doubtless been often said before, but old truths may sometimes obtain a new hearing when uttered by a new voice; and assuredly, the truths here presented, if old in themselves, are, in freshness of tender interest for thousands of hearts, always new. It is solemn to remember that this work of godly upbringing is, at this moment, beginning in unnumbered homes throughout the land, while in others there are vain and sad regrets, that when it might have been done, it was not done better; and the writer has often felt the want of a few words of counsel, brief but pointed, which might be put into the hands

of young parents while still the task lies all before them, and which, blessed as “a word in season,” might save the unavailing sorrows of after years. Whether the following pages are in any degree fitted to subserve this purpose, it is not for him to judge; such as they are, they are committed to Him by whose blessing the smallest crumbs of precious truth “cast upon the waters” may be found “after many days.”

DUNDEE, *April*, 1853.



THE SANCTITY OF HOME.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY---GOD'S ESTIMATE OF THE FAMILY.

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."—GEN. xviii. 19.

It has been beautifully remarked by a striking writer, that when man came first from his Maker's hand, He first gave him a Sabbath, and then He gave him a home; in other words, the sacred day of rest, and the family order, were the first positive institutions ordained by God for the happiness and welfare of his yet sinless creature. And as they were the first, so have they proved the best,—having survived the wreck of the fall, descended comparatively unimpaired

through the changes of six thousand years, and constituting in every nation in which they have been found, and among whom their sanctity has been preserved inviolate, the main sources both of temporal well-being and of spiritual prosperity. Those two twin daughters of paradise came forth with man in the day of his expulsion, like guardian angels of mercy that would not leave him even in the hour of his deepest ruin, and so ever since they have traversed the earth together, the main dispensers alike of earthly and of heavenly blessings, while ever and anon pointing and beckoning us back to the region of their birth.

In regard especially to the domestic economy, it may be said to lie at the root of all society—the fountain-head alike of glory to the nation, and of spiritual life and energy to the church of God. When this divine institution decays, or its purity is impaired, social life dissolves into its elements, and the sacred fire of truth and holiness rapidly languishes and expires.

To the nature, then, of this divine economy,

together with the practical lessons resulting from it, we propose to direct attention in the following pages. In the present chapter we shall endeavour, by way of introduction, to present the domestic system in the light of the Divine Word, thus shewing what is God's own view of the importance of the theme with which we are about to be occupied.

Let us then listen to the testimony of the Word of God in regard to these three points successively :—*The Head of the Family*—*The Business of the Family*—*The Influence of the Family*.

1. THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY.

The honour that is put on the Head of the Family, and the importance that is ascribed to the character, are strikingly illustrated by the words which form the motto of this chapter. They refer to perhaps the most august and venerable of all historical personages; and it would seem that in God's eyes the most august and venerable thing about him was his paternal

character. Great emphasis is laid on this, as if on this very account he had been chosen to the sacred and singular destiny assigned him in the scheme of Divine providence: "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him: *for I know him that he will command his children and his household.*" God was about to make him the founder of a great nation,—a nation that was to carry within its womb the spiritual church of God, and with it the highest destinies of man in all his generations, and to the end of time. "In him and in his seed were all the families of the earth to be blessed." How momentous the position! How vast the responsibility, and how mighty the interests suspended on it! How unspeakably important that the man who should be selected for such a situation should be one pre-eminently well qualified to occupy it—the man who was thus to stamp his image upon a whole people, and that the holy and peculiar people of the living God, and to transmit the influence of his character and spi-

rit through a thousand generations. Downward to latest times the children of his race were to look back to him with reverence and affection as the head and model of all that was glorious in their land—to dress themselves after his image, and to deem it their highest boast that they bore his name, and inherited his character. God, therefore, as it were, would make sure that he was one worthy of such a trust—in whose hands it might safely be reposed. He looks at him in every aspect ; He examines him thoroughly ; He weighs him in the balances of an unerring scrutiny ; and He is satisfied. He is the very man He needs, and whom this great crisis of the world and the church's history calls for. And this is what above all assures him of it : “*I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.*” Whatever other qualities he might possess, it would appear that had he wanted this, he must have been cast aside as a useless branch, and another stem must have been found for the future church of God.

Another illustrious instance of the same thing we have in Job,—a man, whose history has descended to us from an antiquity scarcely less remote, and with a similar stamp of the Divine approbation. He was a man, we are told, “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” Such is the high encomium pronounced upon him by the unerring Judge. And what is the first proof of this—the first fact given in illustration and confirmation of the Divine eulogy? It was his tenderness and faithfulness as a father. While his children were feasting, Job was praying. For “his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.” Thus the mere likelihood or possibility, that, in the thoughtlessness of youthful

hilarity, his children might have been betrayed into some presumptuous sin against God, was enough to bring this anxious father to his knees. He knew too well what the young heart was, and while he could not altogether forbid or prevent such festive gatherings, his faithful heart sorely misgave him as to what the possible results might be. And so "he gave himself unto prayer." He resolved that along with the noise of his children's mirth, the smoke of a father's sacrifice should ascend on high, deprecating deserved displeasure, and pleading for grace to their souls. No doubt he would be remembering them all the time those family festivities continued, and no sooner are they over, than he gathers them all around him, and at early dawn commends them one by one, with solemn burnt-offerings, to the mercy and forgiveness of God. *Thus did Job continually.* What an admirable example this to parents in all time! Verily, what was so needful and so seasonable in those quiet pastoral days of patriarchal life, is no less needful now in this our age of crowded cities and vastly mul-

tiplied temptations. Not less, surely, but the more do our absent children stand in need of a parent's intercessions. Far away in some distant service, or in some heated workshop in the city, or a sailor boy at sea among rough regardless men, or scrambling for perishable gold amid unknown companions at the other end of the world, what can you know how it may be faring with your child in regard to outward morals even, not to speak of higher things? Alas! what havoc may the spoiler be even now making of your once happy charge, now so far from their nest? What then can you do better than follow the example of holy Job, and when you can no more gather your children around you, bear them on your hearts before God, offering up, both morning and evening, prayers and sacrifices, "according to the number of them all?" Then if to you as to him the sad tidings should suddenly come of the total and terrible wreck of all you love, it will surely be no small consolation to remember, that they were not without a parent's prayers in the hour of their extre-

mity, and you may be able, even at that bitter moment, feeling that you have "done what you could," in chastened resignation, to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But we must now hasten on to glance, for a moment, in the second place, at the importance assigned in Scripture to

II. THE BUSINESS OF THE FAMILY.

In illustration of this, we would specially call attention to the following pregnant passages:—

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life ; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons."—
Deut. iv. 9.

And again, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day

shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."—Deut. vi. 4-9.

And, once more, the same instructions are reiterated almost in the self-same earnest language only a few chapters further on :—

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates; that your days may be multi-

plied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth."—
Deut. xi. 18-21.

In each of these passages, you must have been struck with the intimate manner in which personal and family religion are connected together. The one follows directly and necessarily on the other, and is only second in importance to it. Both are inseparably blended together in the divine ideal of a godly and faithful Israelite. "Only take heed *unto thyself*, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, . . . but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons." "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart: . . . and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words *in your heart* and *in your soul*. . . . And ye shall teach them your children, &c." This then is the divine order: first, the godly man, and then the godly

father: first, the holy and circumcised heart, and then, as the natural and blessed result, a holy and circumcised home.

But, come, let us look for a moment into the interior of a godly Israelite's tent, as the veil is drawn before us by the hand of the sacred historian. Let us say that it is the tent of Abraham, as it reposed on the quiet slopes of Mamre more than 3000 years ago. It is eventide, and the boy Isaac, with, mayhap, some of the children of the servants and dependents of the large encampment, are gathered in a happy, earnest group around the patriarch's knees, while the "meek and quiet" Sarah flits to and fro about her usual household cares. It is a busy scene—the scene evidently not of pleasant converse only, but of diligent earnest work. It is in fact a school—the first school that ever existed, and, notwithstanding all the vast improvements in the art of education in modern times, still the best. The family is the only school that carries with it the direct sanction of heaven—that bears upon it the decisive

stamp of a divine ordinance. Other schools, precious and indispensable as they are, are but supplementary to this. Elsewhere we get the education of the head; here, the education of the heart,—here are laid the deep foundations of moral and spiritual culture, on which it is left to other means to raise the superstructure. The father is a teacher by divine right. He receives his disciplinary rod from the same hand, which gives the magistrate his sword, and the king his crown. Nor is it to be a mere perfunctory affair, this domestic patriarchal education. The parental teacher is to understand his work, and is to discharge it strenuously. Not the best organised seminary of modern education is to be the scene of more thorough and effective activity, than this school of the fireside:—“Thou shalt *teach them diligently unto thy children.*” This teaching is to be systematic, persevering, unwearied. “When thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,” the work is to be still going on. It is to pervade every-

thing. It is to be diffused like an atmosphere throughout your whole domestic life,—an atmosphere of calm, cheerful, loving, strenuous piety. It is to be woven through and through into the very texture of your family system and family affections. And finally, it is to be *skilful* and *inventive*: “And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and of thy gates.” You are to be full of holy and wise expedients for keeping the truth before the minds of your children, even as a skilful and zealous master will sometimes have the very walls of his school covered over with pictures, and maps, and Scripture texts, and maxims and rules of duty, and thus keep the subject-matter of instruction ever before his pupils, and pour in his lessons, not only by the ear, but by the eye.

Such in God’s eye is the nature and importance of the business of the fireside. Need I add, that this domestic culture has in our day fallen into fearful neglect—that not the Sabbath-school only, but the week-day school has been allowed too much to cast into the

shade, or altogether to supersede, the far more sacred, and influential, because divine, lessons of the fireside? Or can we doubt that on this account, more, perhaps, than any other cause, the sacred fire of ancient godliness and national worth, which must be fed continually with live coals from this altar, threatens in our day to perish from the land?

But let us now listen to the testimony of God in regard to this subject, in yet another point of view:—

III. THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY.

What vital interests hang upon the domestic system in the economy of the divine providence, may be gathered from the following, among other passages:—

“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old:

Which we have heard and known, and *our fathers have told us.*

We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises

of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that He hath done.

For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which *He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children.*

That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children.

That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” Ps. lxxviii. 2-7.

“*One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.*” Ps. cxlv. 4.

“*The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth.*” Is. xxxviii. 19.

And once more:—

“*I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also.*”

You will scarcely fail, I think, to perceive one and the same principle running through all these passages,—I mean the principle of hereditary transmission, which is thus seen to prevail in the economy of grace, as well as in that of providence. It is true that the children of the kingdom are “not born of blood,” or by natural descent from their parents according to the flesh: still, as it has been well said, grace, though it goes not by the *blood*, often descends in the *line*. On this principle, it seems manifest from the above passages, the Lord mainly relies, in the order of means, for the preservation of the sacred deposit of truth, and its transmission from generation to generation. There are other means, indeed, all of which have their influence, each in its own place, as the preached word, the school, the example of the godly, the instructions of ministers, counsels of Christian friends, the actions and reactions of society and daily life; but the living education of the family is the most powerful of all—probably than all of them put together. We see

its influence in other things. Thus language is transmitted; thus manners and customs; thus reverence for law and government; thus national feelings, prejudices, passions—all that constitutes the very heart of a people, and distinguishes one nation from another. Take for instance the case of language. How is it that, not only the words and general laws of our native tongue, but the faintest shades of sound, and minutest distinctions of idiom, are transmitted from age to age?—not by books, or schools, or colleges, but by the silent unconscious education of the fireside. Hence it is, that among the humbler classes, where the education of books and of scholastic culture, as compared with that of the fireside, exercises a far less influence than among the higher, the forms of language are much more permanent than in any other sphere in the social scale. It is here that the language of the child is really his mother's tongue; and it is interesting to find often in some retired rural neighbourhood, not only the tones and sounds still lingering which

were universal in other days, but old words and old phrases, as it were embalmed in the oral traditions of simple cottagers, which everywhere else have perished alike from people's memories and tongues. The same is true in regard to manners and customs, as we see most strikingly amongst Asiatic nations, and even almost as remarkably among the rural population of our own country. Now God, who in all things honours means, though he can work without them, avails himself of this principle in perpetuating from age to age His faith and fear. A beautiful instance of this we have in the case of Timothy, referred to in one of the passages quoted above. Paul, indeed, has been usually regarded as having been the immediate instrument of his conversion, for he calls him "his own son in the faith;" but if Paul's preaching were the proximate means, the secret of the blessing that attended those means, must be sought in a deeper source—even in the heritage of ancestral piety, that descended on him from his mother, and his mother's mother. Not

that there was any mystical charm or saving virtue in the mere fact of a godly parentage; for the blessing descended to Timothy through the ordinary chain of means ordained for that end—even the care and prayer and pains of those to whom the work of his upbringing was committed: for “from a child,” says Paul, “thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.” Still not the less was it true, that to his mother more than to any other human instrument, did he owe the precious faith that dwelt in him. Paul, at the set time, thrust in the torch into the hearth, and kindled the holy flame; but Eunice and Lois long before had gathered the fuel and prepared the fire.

Thus, ordinarily, throughout every dispensation, and in every age of the church, has the sacred deposit of precious faith been handed down. “One generation *has* praised his work unto another, and declared his mighty deeds.” One faithful race has lighted its torch at the expiring flame of the last. Delivered down

"from sire to son," the sacred heritage passes on, and beacon-fire answers to beacon-fire in long succession through the course of many generations. Not indeed that Divine grace is confined to this or any other particular channel; still in His own sovereign way will He have mercy on whom he will have mercy; again and again does He go out of His way to bless the unlikeliest men by the unlikeliest means. "There are first that shall be last, and there are last that shall be first." But not the less is it His ordinary way to bless the appointed ordinances of His grace, and of these ordinances this is the most eminent and precious of all. What thousand instances of its efficacy crowd upon us from every page of the church's history! Of how many of its burning and most shining lights is it recorded, that, like Isaac and Moses and Samuel and John and Timothy, they enjoyed the blessing of an humble, it may be, but godly parentage, and holy upbringing! And how often has it been seen, that the quiet and unobtrusive piety of one generation has

burst forth in another in illustrious graces and conspicuous deeds, which have illuminated and blessed a whole people, a whole age !*

Such, then, is the Divine estimate of the importance of the domestic economy. We might have given other illustrations of the same truth. We might have shown, for instance, how, in the promised effusion of the Holy Spirit, the interests of the children are indissolubly linked with those of the parents;† how, in times of general repentance and reviving, not only does the whole land mourn, but “each family” mourns “apart;”‡ how, in fine, the marks of better times in the latter day are summed up in this one thing, that the heart of “the fathers should be turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.”§ But the passages we have already given

* *E. g.*, Augustine, Luther, Chalmers.

† Is. xliv. 3, “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed; and my blessing upon thine offspring.”

‡ Zech. xii. 1-14.

§ Mal. iv. 6.

may suffice as examples of the manner in which the whole subject is viewed in the Word of God. And assuredly, if the subject of the family is at all times important, never was it more vitally so than in the days in which we live. At a time when our advancing civilization has so largely multiplied the temptations of the rising race, it seems more than ever needful that a sacred and conservative influence should go out with them from the domestic hearth. And yet, while thus the family institute is become more than ever precious, there seems to be a peculiar danger of its integrity and its energy being impaired. The early employment of our young people in factories and other public works, and their consequent premature independence of their parents, acts as a strong solvent on the family structure, and threatens materially to loosen the solidity of a fabric which had resisted every other adverse influence. While the *centrifugal* force of outward temptations is increased, the *centripetal* attraction of paren-

tal influence is reduced; while the power of the world is greater, the power of home is less: and the consequence is, that while our children are called to launch on a sea that is more than ever perilous, they are in great danger of being less than ever prepared for the voyage. What is the remedy for this? Where shall a binding and cementing principle be found amid so many elements of disunion and dissolution? We answer, in the increased fervour and fidelity of parental piety. The sacred influences of grace must compensate for the lessened force of natural ties. The fire on the hearth must be fed with fuel from above, and then its heavenly light and warmth will draw the members together, and stand in place of every other bond to unite them to one another in the Lord.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOMESTIC CONSTITUTION.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

IN our last chapter we pointed out the remarkable prominence which is assigned in holy Scripture, to the business and influence of the family, and hence inferred the paramount importance, in God's eye, of the subject with which we are now occupied. The reason of that prominence, and the source of that importance, will more fully appear as we proceed, as we now propose to do, to a closer consideration of the nature of the domestic constitution itself.

I. The family is of all institutions the most *fundamental*. It obviously lies at the very root of society, and of all those influences, whether baneful or beneficial, that may be brought to

bear upon it. It is the spring at once of the Church and of the State; the ever-teeming fountain from which the membership of the one, and the population of the other are continually replenished. Let this source of supply be dried up, and, in the course of a few years, the mightiest nation on the face of the earth, and the most prosperous and fruitful branch of the church of Christ, must perish and become extinct. The families of the land are the myriad mountain-springs by which the great river of society is continually fed, and by means of which it is enabled to roll its mighty tide along from generation to generation. And, as are the springs, so in a great measure, will the streams be. According to the principles that are predominant, and the influences that are at work in the one, such, in the main, will be the character of the other. Fathers and mothers! see in this the importance and responsibility of your position. You are furnishing to the nation its citizens, and to the church of Christ its office-bearers and members, and on you it mainly lies,

under God, to decide what the character of those citizens and members shall be,—whether men of the world or men of God, whether hollow formalists or living saints, whether faithful servants of the Lord Jesus, or idlers in his vineyard; whether, in fine, a blessing to their day and generation, or a bane and a curse to the land in which they live, and the times on which their lot is cast.

II. It is the most *permanent* of all institutions. It is always at work; from age to age, from generation to generation. Other influences are temporary, or their operation is from time to time interrupted, but this is enduring and unbroken as the race itself. Governments, laws and customs, dispensations of religion, systems of ecclesiastical polity, have changed in the course of successive ages, but the domestic constitution has remained in its essential features immemorially the same. It is the same at this hour as it was in the days of Noah and of Abraham; it is the same in every region of the earth, and

amid every tribe and race of men. The most tremendous convulsions of human society have not shaken it; the most sweeping revolutions have left it unharmed. All the pillars of the earth have been made to tremble but this; and, just as amid the universal wreck of the old world, one family alone outrode the storm, so in each successive catastrophe which has since overwhelmed society, the family institute itself has still survived as the one memorial of the past, when every other ancient landmark has been swept away. Its influence is incessant; everywhere, and at all times it is at work, with all the invariableness of a law of nature. Other agencies, mighty as they are for good or evil, are more or less irregular and precarious. Only one day in seven does the Sabbath-bell invite us to the house of prayer. Only for a few hours each day, and for a few years of life, at most, does the school afford us its discipline and its instruction. The authority and restraints of law touch only the openly flagitious, and but at rare intervals come forth in imposing form

to strike the general mind ; but the influence of the family is universal, inevitable, unceasing, a permanent element in the very life of a people—even as the air they breathe, and the fountains at which they quench their thirst. Day by day, week by week, year by year, week-days and Sabbath-days, by night and by day, in the house and in the field, is the momentous process carried on throughout all the most important and decisive period in the life of man.

III. It is of all institutions the most *comprehensive*. Other institutions have each their peculiar excellences, and their peculiar powers and resources. As each of them comes from God, so has each its own special work and function in the economy of His providence and grace. The discipline of the school, the authority of the state, the holy influences of the Church, each in their turn contribute their share toward the education of the man of God for usefulness here and for glory hereafter.

Differing as they do in their spheres and functions, none of them could be dispensed with without fatal injury to the highest interests of man. They are "ordinances of God to us for good," each within its own province, and for its own special end. But the family combines them all. It is both a school, a kingdom, and a church. For several, and these the most precious years of our life, it stands to the child in the place of them all, and constitutes the one instrument of his intellectual, moral, and spiritual education. It is a school as we have seen already,—the first and also the best in which the child is placed, and where all our earliest and deepest lessons are learnt. It is a kingdom too, with its government, and its laws, and its privileges, and its strong arm of power, which "is a terror to evil doers, and a praise to such as do well." And it is a Church,—the "church in the house"—with its worship, its instruction, its wholesome discipline, its holy fellowship, and its feasts of love. And from this there follow two results: first, it is the

most influential of all ordinary means of blessing. Including within itself the principle of each, it combines the excellences and powers of them all, and thus wields a power not only greater than any one of them, but probably than all of them taken together. And then, the influence it does exert is rendered the more vitally important from its direct bearing on the whole future course of life. It is, in fact, a rehearsal of life itself, a working out in model of that very end, which is to be carried out afterward on a grander scale, and to more serious purpose in the wider arena of the world. The dutiful and holy child is just the embryo of the orderly scholar, the loyal citizen, the devout and fervent disciple. Here in the narrow circle of the family, the young immortal being is from the first trained and nurtured for those very functions and duties which are to constitute the business of his life in every after sphere,—even as the young voyager in his little skiff, and within the sheltered bay, is learning the elements of that very art which is in after

years to bear him safely over the boundless and trackless waters.

IV. It is of all institutions the most *unquestioned*. Its legitimacy has never been assailed. The parent reigns on his domestic throne by a title against which the faintest doubt has never been breathed. It is unchallenged alike from without and from within,—acknowledged at once by surrounding powers and by its own subjects. This is no precarious power, founded either on force, or on the spontaneous election of a fickle people, but an authority grounded on the very constitution of things,—on the nature of man, and the will and appointment of heaven. The most legitimate and the firmest throne on earth, is that of a father over his own children; the oil of an unquestioned consecration is on his head. This is a vast advantage toward a right and beneficent use of his power. His authority being unquestioned and unquestionable, he has only, with holy energy, and in the spirit and strength

of God, to wield it for the great ends for which it has been given. All other governments are more or less diverted from the steady and fearless prosecution of the task assigned them by fears for their own security, and the necessity of considering in every act, not only how it will affect the public good, but the stability of their own tenure of power. Thus, rulers are doubtless often withheld from the good they would willingly have done, by an apprehension of the shock their government might sustain in the doing of it. The force of the popular gale is often so great, that they must bend before it if they would not be broken. Like wary navigators they must veer and tack about, if they would make any way against contrary winds and tides. But the parent is under no such necessity. He needs fear no insurrection, no violent revolution in his kingdom. Let him be wise, firm, faithful, and benignant in the discharge of his duty, and his throne is as firm as the pillars of the world. Let him "rule in the fear of the Lord," and cast all fear of consequences to the

winds. There "is a divinity that hedgeth round" a father, such as guards not any other earthly throne. Who ever heard of a parent discrowned and dethroned by his own children, and an elective head substituted in his place? They may resent the abuse of his authority, they may fiercely rebel against his injustice and cruelty, they may even lift up their hands against him, or, in self-defence, they may forsake his dwelling when it has become the den of a wild beast rather than a human home, but scarcely even in such a case will the child assume the father's place, or usurp his honoured name.

V. It is of all institutions the most *compact*. It constitutes an organic whole,—as much so as a tree with its branches, a body with its members. It is not a mere assemblage of individuals of different ages and sexes living together under the same roof, and feeding at the same board, but one united body, animated by a common spirit, and bound together by common

ties of mutual dependence and relationship. A lodging-house with its random gathering of old and young, good and bad, under one roof, and though under one presiding and directing authority, is not a family: in most cases nothing on earth is so fearfully unlike a family as such scenes are. Such a place is rather a mere den or haunt where a number of animals congregate and feed, than a home for the heart of immortal man. Such a thing has no resemblance to a family; as well call a heap of stones and foul rubbish a house, or a faggot of withered rotting branches a tree. And yet how many families, or what once were such, are little better than this! Alas! as some lodging-houses, through the transmuting power of Christian grace have become like families, thousands of families have become little better than lodging dens. The once living united body has turned into a corrupting crumbling corpse. Love has given place to hatred, holy unity to selfish isolation, goodly order to lawless anarchy, and that which in its purity constitutes the fairest image

of heaven, has become through its perversion and desecration the very type and shadow of hell.

Originally, however, it is not so; and the family, just so far as it continues to be a family, is one body. Its organic unity and the great practical importance of it may be gathered from the language of Joshua, which we have placed at the head of this chapter: "As for me," says he, "and my house." He feels that, in an important sense, he can answer for his house as well as for himself. He speaks of it as a whole —one body—"my house;" and that body one with himself, so that the one should move and act with the other: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He stood to that family as the head to a living body, as the helmsman to a vessel, as the leader to an army. He could move, direct, control, impel it; inspire it with his spirit, stamp it with his own character. The very nature of the domestic system provides for this,—fits it, in the most remarkable manner, for thus moving and acting together. In it we see a regular gradation and subordina-

tion, as it were, of ranks, as in a well ordered state, each linked to and depending on the other, and all knit together into one compact organic whole. Thus, as in the nations of the great world, we have first the king as supreme, then the high officers and peers of the realm, then the lesser powers and dignities, and so on by successive ranks and degrees until we reach the humblest of the people; so in this little domestic kingdom we have first the parent, then the eldest child—now, perhaps, grown up to be his father's right hand, or her mother's companion and counsellor,—then the next alike in age and in honour, and the next, and the next, until you reach the youngest. Let the father of a large family arrange his whole domestic group before him; let him mark the regular gradation by which they descend from a strength and stature almost equal to his own to that of the tiny feeble child; let him observe, too, the manner in which the younger ones look up to the elder, mimic their every tone and gesture, copy their example, as if their highest ambition on

earth were to be exactly like them,—and say whether they were not manifestly intended and made to be one body, and to move and act together. Just as in a tree you have first the trunk, then the great boughs, then the lesser branches, then the sprouts and twigs, and all so “fitly joined together” and compacted into one, that if you move the stem, you by the same shock also move the whole, even so is it here. Joshua felt that this was the relation in which he stood to his family—he the stem, they the branches—so that, in a great measure, they must stand or fall with him. Hence it is that he resolves, in the strength of God, as one responsible, not for himself only, but for all beneath the shadow of his roof: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

You may the better see the force of this consideration, if you suppose the domestic constitution to have been differently ordered in this respect from what it has been. Suppose that there had been no such gradations of age and stature between the parent and the youngest child of his household—that a whole family of

helpless infants were all at once cast upon his care, without one being able to help or care for the other,—what a medley of confusion would this inevitably entail! How hard would it be, as they grew up, to work the unruly group into any order, to mould them into one, and inspire them with any common spirit! How certainly, in the case of every large family, would a wild anarchy take the place of the fair and goodly order which now prevails, where each little stranger that is added to the circle finds a well-ordered system already in existence, and naturally and instinctively falls into its place! It is of vast practical importance that you should mark these things, as they shew how manifestly God has intended that you should rule in your own household—that it should be a well-ordered and manageable kingdom in your hands—that it should be moulded by your spirit and directed by your will, even as the vessel is moved by the helm. How immense, then, is your influence and your responsibility! How weighty the trust reposed in you, and how vast your capabilities

for evil or for good in the discharge of it ! Oh ! my beloved friends, who stand in this position, you are freighted with the destinies of immortal beings—beings dear to you as your very souls, and all unconscious of the dangers that beset their momentous voyage,—and according as you steer your course, may they reach the eternal haven, or be dashed on the rocks and perish. What need to take heed unto yourselves, and unto the little flock over which the God of nature and of grace hath made you overseers—to watch for their souls as those who must give an account—and to resolve, on your bended knees, with all your heart, “ As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord !”

VI. And finally, The domestic government is, of all others, the most *absolute*. The father reigns in his own household with an unlimited authority. No one has any right to control him or to call him to account. Across the threshold of his dwelling not the Queen herself dare pass. His children are committed by God entirely to his charge, and for their tending, government, and up-

bringing, he is responsible to Him alone. In the case, indeed, of some outrageous abuse of his power, as where the parent positively maltreats or threatens the life of the child, the law may step in and snatch the helpless victim out of his hands; but with such extreme exceptions his authority is absolute and inviolable. He may instruct his children or neglect them; he may be kind or cruel; he may set them a holy example, or a vile and noxious one; he may train them up for God or for the devil, lead them to the sanctuary, or to the haunts and dens of sin: still no one can interfere—the power and the responsibility are all his own. Friends, indeed, may remonstrate; ministers may plead; teachers may offer their gratuitous services; benevolent institutions may throw open their gates, and implore him to give up to their care his poor injured children; but they cannot command. God hath said to that man, “Take this child, and nurse it for me,” and man cannot reverse the charge. For better or for worse the children are his own, and for them he must answer

to the Holy Judge at the "great white throne." Fathers and mothers! the work of your children's upbringing is yours, and no man can take it out of your hands. You cannot shift that responsibility away, you cannot devolve it upon another. They are thrown on your care, and on your care they must depend. The Great Shepherd points to your little group, and says to you, "Feed my lambs." How fearful, then, your guilt if that work is neglected! In all the world you are the only beings by whom it can be rightly done, and on you must fall the blame if it is left undone. If these children are untaught—untrained in the way they should go; if they are bereft of the blessing of a holy example, godly discipline, and a father's and a mother's prayers, and if through that sore deprivation they perish, then on you must lie the blame, at your hands shall be required their blood. Through all eternity these children may curse the day that ever they knew you—that ever they passed within the threshold of your dwelling—that ever they learned to call you father or mother!

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN FATHER.

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—Eph. vi. 4.

We think it desirable to take up the duties of the father and of the mother separately, and to devote to each a distinct illustration, because the sphere assigned in God's providential order to the two parents respectively, is in some respects essentially different, and each has a certain special work to discharge, which we are very apt to lose sight of when both are considered together under the head of parents. The importance of this discrimination will, we think, become abundantly apparent as we proceed.

The duties of the father naturally come into consideration first. We shall speak first of his special *sphere*, and then of his *work*.

I. The father's special *sphere* in the domestic economy is, in a general view, obvious enough. It may be defined as the *place of command*. He is the supreme head and ruler of the domestic community, and therefore bound, not only to regulate its affairs with wisdom, but to govern its subjects with a firm and a vigorous hand. He is not only to exert an influence, but to wield an authority. Like Abraham of old, it is his, not only to instruct his household, provide for his household, watch over and protect his household, wield, both by precept and winning example, a salutary influence over his household, but "to command his children and his household" that they "keep the way of the Lord." This lies at the very foundation of whatever is precious in the paternal character; other qualities are in their place valuable, this is essential. He must wear the crown and wield the sceptre of a benignant, yet sacred and inviolable, authority, or the very essence and charm of the paternal character is gone. Filial fear must blend with filial love in all the

thoughts and feelings of his children towards him; and he must act so as at once to command that fear, and to inspire that love. It was the want of this, plainly, that constituted the fatal defect in the paternal character of Eli. That he was a kind father, we cannot doubt; that he diligently instructed his children in the right way, we can well believe; that he set before them a holy and consistent example, we have every reason to conclude; nay, he even went farther, he remonstrated with them, warned, pled with them to relinquish their evil ways. For when "he heard all that his sons did unto all Israel," "he said unto them, why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress." Now all this was very well so far as it went. As the gentle remonstrance of an affectionate mother, it might have been admissible—though there are mothers, even the gentlest mothers, who by their look and voice in such a case, could make the hearts of full-grown men cower and tremble

in their presence. Still, there is a limit beyond which the weaker parent dare not go in the way of severity, with those who have in a great measure grown beyond a mother's control. Gentleness is her strength, and she may only weaken her influence by changing it for a weapon not her own. As a mother's admonition, then, these words might perhaps have passed without blame; but as coming from a father, they were lame and impotent beyond expression; it was only trifling, and worse than trifling with the case. He pleads, when he ought to command; he remonstrates when he ought to denounce and condemn. He whispers in gentle accents when he ought to have flashed a holy indignation, and clothed himself with all the thunder of a father's wrath. Accordingly, in the Lord's sentence upon Eli and his household, this reproof is treated as if it had never been given; utterly ignored, as a thing unworthy of being taken into account. "For I have told him," so the terrible sentence runs, "that I will judge his house for ever, for the

iniquity that he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not;" or in the vivid rendering of the margin, "*frowned* not upon them," as a justly incensed father should.

In short, there are two instruments of mighty efficacy over the hearts of children, neither of which can be dispensed with without peril of the most fatal results. The one is a tender gentleness, the other an awful authority: the first belongs peculiarly to the mother, the latter to the father. Thus in the double parentage of the domestic system, we have the harmonious embodiment of the two mightiest and most sacred principles in the divine government—the principle of law, and the principle of love: the one is embodied in the father, the latter in the mother. Yet must not these two ever be entirely separated from one another. The mother must command even while she loves; the father must love even while he commands. We read of a "father's bowels," as well as a mother's love; we read of the "*law* of a mother,"

no less than of a "father's commandments." Still, though command be not the exclusive, it certainly is the special function of the father; and there are occasions in the domestic history, when a direct and solemn appeal must be made from one parent to the other, and when the forward child must be made to feel that he has not only to deal with a power which he cannot resist, but with an authority which, in awful sacredness, is second only to that of God.

II. In proceeding to speak of the *duties* of the father, we necessarily enter on ground which is more or less common to both parents; for their functions differ not so much in the things to be done, as in the manner of doing them. Both are to train up their children in the way they should go; both alike are "to teach them diligently" the statutes of the Lord; both are to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: only that in the one case those instructions are to be enforced by a father's authority,—in the other, sweetened and

endeared by a mother's love. At present we shall endeavour to point out the main features of a truly godly upbringing of children,—keeping especially in view whatever is peculiar in the sphere and functions of the father.

(1.) This training must be *gentle* and *patient*. This is by no means inconsistent, as we have already seen, with a holy authority. On the contrary, it is absolutely necessary to give that authority its due weight and influence. And yet, perhaps, there is no point in which the father is more apt to fail than in this. The language of the sacred text, which forms the motto of this chapter, seems plainly to imply this:—"Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;" and again (Col. iii. 2,), "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged,"—surely implying that fathers are peculiarly liable to the sin of getting angry and impatient with their children, and so of punishing them in such a way as, instead of subduing them, only provokes them to wrath in return. Fathers are in danger of this on several ac-

counts. In the first place, they are naturally less patient and forbearing than the mother,—passive endurance being the peculiar quality of the female nature, as active energy is of the other sex. In that love which dares all and achieves all in behalf of its object, the man may excel the woman; but in that long-suffering, unweariable affection which beareth all things in behalf of the being it loves, he is far outdone by her who, in other respects, is the weaker vessel, but in this by far the nobler and more heroic. Then, again, his patience, in itself less enduring, is also less exercised. How little does he know of those weary night-watchings—of those hours of sleepless sleep, wherein the eyes are closed, but the heart waketh still—of those thousand sacrifices of comfort and convenience which, from the first, the mother must make in behalf of her little one? Hence, when from time to time his patience is tried, he is less prepared for it, and is apt to give way at once to a hasty and sinful irritation. In fine, he is less with his children, and on this account alone his

love for them, though it may be as genuine, will rarely be as deep, and tender, and all-constraining, as that of the mother.

This danger, however, though natural, is not on that account the less serious. The pernicious consequences of such ebullitions of parental impatience and severity it is scarcely possible to overrate. You thus lose at once the respect and the affection of your child. Filial reverence gives place to slavish fear. He no more bows beneath the awe of a father's authority, but only trembles as before the power of an animal stronger than himself. Instead of clinging, as a true child will ever do, to the hand that unwillingly corrects, he will cower or flee from you as from an infuriated beast of prey. He will yield to you, indeed, but not because he feels that he ought, but because he knows he must; and he will do so less and less willingly, and wrestle with your superior force more and more fiercely, as his strength becomes gradually more nearly a match for your own, till at last he can throw off the yoke, and de-

clare open war. Alas ! in how many frightful instances is this result every day realized ! In other cases, matters never come to this length. In the case of very young children, or even those of riper years, who are of a more gentle temperament, the effect will commonly be different ; the child will "be discouraged"—its spirit will be crushed and broken. Finding that do what he will, he cannot please his parent—that he cannot even approach him without danger of a stern and angry repulse, he will soon lose all heart ; and those young affections which would so fain have fondly clung around the parental stem, nipped by that early frost, will pine away and die ! Let, then, your government and your discipline be firm, decided,—when occasion calls for it, even stern and severe; but let it still be calm, gentle, loving. Let your severity be that of principle, not of passion ; and even when you most darkly frown, let your child still feel that that black and terrible cloud only hides for a moment a father's gracious face.

(2.) This training must be *skilful* and *pains-taking*. The very language of the apostle plainly suggests this idea. "*Bring them up*," or nourish them up, says he, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It is the same word as that used in that passage in this same epistle : "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but *nourisheth* and *cherisheth* it, as the Lord the church ;" suggesting the most tender and studious solicitude about the object of your care. You are to cherish your child, and anxiously to watch over its highest interests, even as a nurse cherishes a delicate babe, or a gardener a beautiful but frail and tender plant. You are carefully to study its nature, and earnestly seek a holy skill from on high, that you may know how to awaken its dormant powers, and draw forth and nurture its best affections. Thus will you truly *educate** the young heart in the best sense,—drawing forth whatever is most precious from within, as well as inculcating whatever is most wholesome and sanctifying

* From *educo*, to draw forth.

from without, while still supplicating from on high that quickening and transforming grace, without which all such efforts must prove in vain. I cannot help recurring again for an instant to the idea of the skilful gardener, who so tenderly *trains* and guides the feeble climbing-plant, fastens its fragile branches, and carefully shields it from the wind and the storm, if so be it may survive the rigours of an ungenial clime. Go you, then, into your little garden, and do likewise.

(3.) This training must be *firm* and *faithful*. "Bring them up," says the apostle, "in the nurture," or, more properly, the discipline, "of the Lord." The word used is the same which is elsewhere rendered chastening, as where it is said, "No *chastening* is for the present joyous, but grievous;" "What son is there whom the father *chasteneth* not?" The word, doubtless, has a greater comprehensiveness of meaning, including everything, whether in the way of instruction or of correction, which is essential to the Christian upbringing of the young;

but certainly the common use of it, to which I have referred, is sufficient to show how very closely, in the Divine mind, godly education and godly chastisement are connected together. Indeed, the sanctity and efficacy of the rod, as an essential instrument of moral and spiritual culture, is a principle again and again enforced in the Word of God. Especially is it reiterated with significant emphasis by him in whom the highest human wisdom, united to a Divine inspiration, combine to impart a peculiar weight to his words:—"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," Prov. xiii. 24; "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying," Prov. xix. 18; "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him," Prov. xxii. 15; "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell," Prov. xxiii. 13, 14; "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child

left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul," Prov. xxix. 15, 17. The abuse of this instrument we have already referred to, nor can we too sedulously guard against the least approach to that abuse; but never let the fear of this cause us to lose sight of the essential and radical importance of the thing itself, as a precious and heaven-appointed means of blessing. You may lay aside your precepts—you may lay aside your warnings, counsels, rebukes—you may lay aside your instructions, catechisings, almost your parental blessing—if this sacred ensign of your God-given authority be cast away. As well, almost, might a house be without a Bible, as without a parental rod. Yet,

(4.) Let your training be *kind* and *persuasive*,—"bring them up," says the apostle, "not only in the nurture," but "in the *admonition* of the Lord." Thus, kind, frank, and hearty counsel is to combine with godly discipline in your plan of training throughout. Not only when occa-

sion calls are you to exert all a father's authority, but in gracious admonition to pour forth all a father's heart. Let not your solicitude for your child appear only in denunciation of errors after they are committed, but far more in that watchful love that forecasts the coming danger, and gives the timely note of warning before it comes. Many beautiful examples of such paternal admonition are given us in the Bible,—none more than those memorable parting words of David to his favourite son :—“ And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind ; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts : if thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.” These words seem to have been remembered by Solomon himself in after years, and he solemnly re-echoes them in his own weighty and earnest words :—“ Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend

to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not: neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." With what a persuasive and solemn cadence do these words fall upon our ears! Never truly is age so venerable, as when thus, in the ears of the young and the unwary, it utters the earnest words of experience in the endearing tones of love. How much evil, and how many bitter tears might thus be timely saved! How often might the seasonable use of this gentler instrument prevent the necessity of resorting to other and sterner means! How

often might the timely intervention of the counsellor preclude the dread summons of the judge! Who knows whether even in Eli's case, the feeble admonition which he addressed at last to his sons, might not have proved effectual, had it been used in time, and thus averted from his house the ruin which his weak compliance entailed! The same medicine which at an early stage might have saved the life of the patient, may be mere trifling, and worse than trifling, at another.

(5.) Finally, and above all, let this training be *godly* and *devout*. Let it be the "nurture and admonition of the Lord,"—that nurture and admonition which He approves, and which is pervaded throughout by the spirit which His word and His grace impart. Let your upbringing of your children be thoroughly and pervasively Christian. Whatever ye do in this as in every other relation or sphere, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let every word, look, act of your domestic life be embalmed with His grace. Give your children

from the first to Him. Give them to Him again and again. Let the baptismal dedication of the sanctuary be repeated daily in the closet. Pray for them; pray with them; carry each of them individually to the throne as jewels fixed upon your heart. Above all, be yourselves an example of all you would have them to be. Be "imitators of God as dear children;" and thus reflecting His image, you will be to your little ones a lively type and representative of Him to whom you desire to lead them, and to whom from their cradle they have learned to lisp the prayer, "Our Father, which art in Heaven."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN MOTHER.

"Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."—EXODUS II. 9.

It is remarkable that, while we have special counsels given us for the discharge of the duties of fathers, no similar precept is addressed to mothers. Perhaps the reason is, that the father is regarded as the official head of the family, and that on that account the instructions which apply more or less to both parents, are addressed nominally to him alone; or perhaps the counsels given to fathers, in the two cases referred to in our last chapter, were delivered mainly on account of the special warning which they embody, and which refers to a danger peculiarly incident to fathers, leaving both parents to gather their general duties from those numerous passages in the Old Testament

Scriptures, where they are so fully and so impressively described. Be that, however, as it may, if there be no formal instructions given to the mother, she has what is far better, in that deep, tender, inextinguishable love towards the children of her womb, which nature has implanted, and which needs only to be directed by Christian principle, and hallowed and inspired by Christian motives, to prove a spring of holy parental duty, which may stand in place of a thousand rules and a thousand arguments; and the result is, that even without any express directory, the duties of the mother have probably been much more often well discharged than those of the father, and have proved the source of greater blessings to the church and to the world, than any other influence whatsoever.

In the following remarks on this important and attractive subject, we shall speak first of the *influence* of mothers, and then of their *duties*.

I. The influence of the mother, confessedly great, derives its power from the following main sources:—

(1.) It is the most *tender* and *constraining* of all human influences. Of all powers here on earth that subdue and sway the hearts of men, the mightiest by far is love; and of all forms of human love, the mightiest is that of a mother. It is of all loves the deepest, the purest, the most tender, the most self-forgetting, the most abiding, and therefore it is the most constraining. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” “As one whom his *mother* comforteth, so will I comfort you.” These are words which speak to the heart of all men in every country, and in every rank and condition of life, and which tell of a love that is like no other known upon the earth. Never does persuasion plead in such resistless accents; never does authority speak in tones so constraining, as when it uses the voice of a mother. The proud and fro-

ward boy that will struggle in mad rebellion against his father's strength, will often quail before the look, and bow beneath "the law" of his mother; and he who stood out against the might of authority, sinks vanquished by the weakness of love. Then,

(2.) It is the *earliest* of all human influences. No one can tell when the influence of a mother begins. It is coeval almost with our birth, certainly with the first and faintest dawn of intellectual consciousness. Long before the days of fatherly correction, or of scholastic discipline, or of pastoral care, a silent, gentle, but powerful influence is already passing from the face and the voice of the mother, to the heart of her child. From the first it looks up into that face with instinctive trust and love, and what we trust and love we naturally copy. Thus, through the assimilative power of love, the fond mother is, from the first, moulding the heart of her child into the image of her own, stamping her own likeness in the soft wax of its unconscious and susceptible infancy. What

an advantage does this give the mother, above all those other influences and agencies which may afterwards affect the future career of her child! *She has, as it were, the first word;* she has this early spring of the soul all to herself, to sow the precious seed. Others will come with their tares afterwards, but not now. Long before the deceiver and betrayer can approach with their flattering lies, she may be, through the grace of God, laying the foundations of holy principle deep within the heart. The earliest lessons are the deepest; the earliest memories are the most abiding. The twig that is bent in pliant feebleness, retains its set amid all the gnarled vigour of its mature and giant strength. The child is the parent of the man; and the parent of the child, not in its form only but in the first and deepest lineaments of its spirit, is the mother.

(3.) The mother's influence is, of all others, the *most constant.* From day to day, for several years of life together, it goes on incessantly. No other agency can, in this point of

view, be brought into comparison with it. The father takes the little one on his knee for an hour on the Saturday or the Sabbath evening; the minister steps in now and then on his domiciliary rounds, gently to pat his head, and ask him about his Creator, his Redeemer, and his Sanctifier; by and by the schoolmaster comes, with his wholesome discipline and iron laws, and claims a part of each day for serious work; but the influence of the mother is unceasing. It surrounds the little ones like an atmosphere. They do not seem so much to be with her, as to be part of her very self; clustering round her, as the buds around the parent rose. All her thoughts are about them; all their trust is in her. Hers is the first face they see at early dawn, and it is her hand that closes their eyes and draws the curtain ere they sleep.* Like

* These words more exactly apply to those, who, from their circumstances in life, are necessarily more with their children, and do more personally for them. But it is a question, whether, in the higher circles of life, *love* should not do what *necessity* does in the other, and whether any mother should consent wholly to devolve

little planets they seem to revolve around her, rejoicing ever in the light of her smile, and in the warmth of her love.

(4.) Finally, a mother's influence is the most *lasting*. The life and the joy of home, its gentle sway does not terminate on our leaving the parental roof. Like a guardian angel, it still follows us through all the future scenes of life. The chill intercourse of a strange world sends the heart of the youth fondly back to the home of his mother, and it is long before he can learn to regard any place as *his* home, which is not also *hers*. Kind messages and greetings, and gifts of love, will still be issuing forth thence to the distant children, and though scattered to all the ends of the earth, and separated by wide seas or continents from one another, they still regard that spot as their common centre. In all else divided, here at least they still are one. The fire of their

upon another those tenderest offices of affection, which naturally enshrine themselves amid the deepest and fondest memories of the heart.

mother's hearth has not yet expired for them, and they can feel its light and warmth, and, as it were, gather round it though far away. A poor slave-boy in the United States was separated from his mother while yet but a child, and settled under a hard master, on a plantation thirty miles away. Though thus at no great distance, they were scarcely ever permitted to meet one another. But the heart of the child was still in the home of his mother; her smile cheered him in his toils, and her image visited him in his dreams. "My mother," he says, "occasionally found an opportunity to send me some token of remembrance and affection—a sugar-plum or an apple; but I scarcely ever ate them; they were laid up, and handled, and wept over, till they wasted away in my hand."* Touching, sacred words! So there too, and among those hapless children of oppression, the sanctity of home is felt; nor can long and weary absence, nor all the power of a tyrant law, rend asunder those hearts whom God, by his own blessed bond, has united

* *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Mrs Beecher Stowe.

together. And so, too, in other and happier scenes, the vision of his mother still follows the absent child, and dwells with him continually as a sacred charm to smooth the brow of care, and scare the thoughts of sin away. Nor is it the youth alone that feels this influence. Even in after years, and when his own children have grown up around him, his musing thoughts will sometimes recur to the days and the scenes that are indissolubly blended with the thought of his mother. That dear sacred image still lives within him, and will still rise up before him in his daily or his nightly dreams. Yes, there she is, living, lifelike, just as you saw her thirty or forty years ago, sitting by the cradle-side, rocking and singing her little one to rest; or in her own arm-chair by the winter fireside, with her happy group around her; or as you saw her once on a sad and woeful time, pacing up and down with weary yet unwearying step, during the long day and the long night, with her dying darling in her arms, that poor drooping one that would go to no other arms but

hers; or when, on some dark stormy night, she tripped with light footstep to your bedside, when you were ill, and fluttered with nameless terrors, and by her very look and voice chased all those fears away; or when you knelt at her feet and whispered your evening prayer; or surprised her in her closet and found her on her knees; or on bright Sabbath-days when you all flocked around her to the house of God, and clustered about her in the family pew;—all this, I say, lives within a man, retains evermore a vernal freshness within his heart, springs up within the memory as a perennial fountain of health and blessing. Other friends may be forgotten, and all other names may lose their charm, but the name and the memory of his mother are still precious as ever, and wields over his heart the power of a sacred spell, that terminates only with the grave !

How mighty, then, in every view in which we can regard it, is a mother's influence!—an influence which, as we have thus seen, begins almost from the day of our birth, continues unbroken

during all the years of childhood and of boyhood, goes out with us into the world, and follows us amid all the temptations of youth, and all the cares of middle life, onward to our dying day! How solemn the responsibility of her with whom this power is entrusted! What a mighty instrument does she wield, either for evil or for good! How terrible the guilt of her who either buries this talent in the earth, or abuses it to the ruin, instead of improving it to the salvation, of her children! We fear there are vast multitudes, even in this Christian land, and amongst the membership of our Christian churches, who must be ranked under one or other of these classes,—some, on the one hand, who, by early neglect, have lost all influence over their children; others who still retain that influence, but in whose hands it is simply bad and mischievous,—all on the side of vanity, and worldliness, and forgetfulness of God. What a fearful reckoning must such render in the great day! Oh! how shall they then answer the Judge of all, when He asks an account of the

precious charge committed to their hands? Shall they dare then to look their injured offspring in the face, and give the Cain-like reply, Was I my children's keeper?

II. Under the head of the *mother's duty*, I shall endeavour to express what I have to say as briefly as possible, in the form of a few plain practical hints.

Be loving. You may think it strange that I should deem it needful to mention this. Of course, you will say, a mother will be loving. "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" The very essence of the maternal character is love. True; and this is the very reason why I would press this so earnestly upon you. If this is lost, then all is gone. This touches the very life and soul of your maternal character and influence. This is the sceptre of your power: if this is broken, your empire over their hearts is at an end. And then, remember that though you may truly love your children, you may often fail to show your love; and thus, by apparent,

though not real, unkindness, sadly chill the young affections of your child. Love, to be winning and endearing, must be felt; and there are some mothers who, by a rude and harsh exterior, sadly mar the influence of a kind and faithful heart. Beware of sudden bursts of angry impatience. Amid the harassing throng of your daily cares and toils, a rude or hasty word may soon escape you, which may make an impression on the susceptible heart of childhood never to be afterwards effaced. Is there any among my readers who is in the habit, in moments of irritation, of hurling opprobrious epithets at her children? We have heard such things ere now, and never heard them without horror. As well, almost, take a knife at once, and plunge it into the bosom of your child, as thus, by outraging its tenderest and holiest feelings, aim a murderous blow at the life of its soul.

Be firm. Never let your love degenerate into indulgence. As you deny yourself in everything else for its sake, learn also to deny your

own feelings, when faithfulness and the true welfare of your child demand the sacrifice. Let your love be tempered with decision,—your decision sweetened by love. Be tender and gentle at all times, yet calm and steadfast to your purpose in everything that concerns their real good. How few parents are there who in any good degree realize this happy mean! Most are continually oscillating between two equally pernicious extremes; at one time weakly indulging their children,—at another, as weakly giving way to unholly passion; “for their own pleasure” fondling them, and “for their own pleasure” chastening them, by turns, as the humour of the moment is upon them. In either case they act on a principle of mere selfishness, seeking the gratification of their own weak and foolish hearts, rather than the true good of those they profess to love. Alas! how rare a thing is that true parental discipline, at once loving and faithful, which subdues while it wins and draws, drives far away the folly from the heart of the child, while it binds that heart

in closer and tenderer bonds than ever to itself.

Be hopeful, and aim high. Who knows what rich success the Lord may be pleased to vouchsafe to your loving and faithful endeavours? He promises you your wages, and who can tell what rich guerdon that may be? That quick precocious boy, that now so greedily drinks in the rudiments of knowledge, and whose keen bright eye and open brow bespeak the ardent spirit within,—who can tell what he may yet be, what a blessing to his country, what a burning and shining light in the Church of God? Such things have been, and such things will be again. How little did Moses' mother dream, when her little voyager among the bulrushes was restored to her arms, what wages those were which she should get for his nursing! As little did the mother of Timothy, of Augustine, of Luther, of Chalmers. Even so it may be with you. Or should it be otherwise,—should an humbler and quieter lot be assigned to the child of your womb, at least he may be a saint

of God, a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus, a light of the world on earth, a star in the firmament in heaven; and whether he shall be that or no, depends, more than on any other influence under God, on his mother.

Be cheerful, and make all happy round you. Mix religion with everything, and let it be a happy religion. Let it be a calm, bright, sunny, loving piety,—hallowing all, sweetening all, endearing all. Let your children learn to associate religion with whatever is truest and most blessed in life, and with everything that is dearest and most precious in their mother,—with her calm smile, her gentle voice, her cheerful happy step;—with quiet Sabbath days, and sweet Bible texts, and holy hymns and prayers first learned upon her knees. So shall the family on earth be a lively image, and it may be also, through divine grace, an earnest and foretaste of the eternal family in heaven.

And, finally, continue your efforts *perseveringly* to the last. Never despair of the grace of God. So long as the day of grace lasts, and

your child is still in the land of the living, work on perseveringly, hopefully. The prodigal may wander long, yet be brought home at last. The spring may be chill and backward, yet a glorious harvest may come after all. "In the morning," then, "sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether both shall be alike good." Let your efforts for their salvation begin with their birth, and terminate only with their death. When they are infants on the breast, give them again and again to Jesus. When they are boys and girls, train them up for him. When they go out into the world, still follow them with your counsels and your prayers. Crowd the audience-chamber above with your petitions and your arguments. Cling to His feet like her of old who pled for her afflicted daughter, and take no denial. Then though for a time he may seem to spurn you from his feet, to you too may the gracious answer come at last:—"O

woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

We have been speaking throughout to parents: one word ere we close to others not in this position who may read these lines.

My dear readers! have you enjoyed the benefit of such a godly upbringing as that which we have described? or do you now enjoy it? Has yours been the priceless blessing of a godly father, a Christian praying mother? Then what a heavy responsibility does this entail upon you! It is the greatest mercy an immortal being can enjoy on its entrance on life, and the mightiest instrument of good which a God of providence and of grace has vouchsafed. How great then will be your condemnation if after all you prove careless and ungodly! You can never expect any other instrument so tender, so winning, so constraining as that which has been tried, or is being tried on you. Oh! see that it be not tried in vain.

Let not this harvest pass, this bright summer end, and leave you unsaved !

Or has this inestimable blessing been in your case withheld ? and have you been made to suffer under the worst of all orphanhood—the orphanhood of the soul ? Well, it is indeed a sad deprivation,—sad to get only a stone from those from whom you expected bread, to have sucked in only poison from those breasts from which you should have had the nutritive milk of truth. Yet bless the Lord that if this means of grace has been denied, others have been given. If you have never had a Christian home, you have still the Bible, the Gospel, the Sabbath ; improve the means you have, and God will make up the lack of that which is denied. He will give you the blessing He hath promised to the fatherless; yea, He will Himself “ be a Father unto you, and ye shall be His sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

CHAPTER V.

THE FAMILY HISTORY.

"Ebenezer—Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

1 SAMUEL VII. 12.

THE erecting of memorial stones, with the view of keeping in remembrance the more signal doings of the Lord, and His more remarkable interpositions in behalf of His people, was a custom of very frequent observance in the early ages of the Jewish history. Thus we find Jacob, on his awaking from his wondrous dream at the gate of heaven, taking the stone which he had put for his pillow, and setting it up for a pillar, and pouring oil upon it, as a perpetual memorial of the glorious scene which had just transpired, and a witness of the solemn covenant into which he now entered afresh with God. Moses, too, after the signal and miraculous defeat of Amalek at the rock of Meribah

"built," we are told, "an altar, and called the name of it, *Jehovah Nissi*, the Lord my Banner." In the same spirit, Joshua, after the crossing of the Jordan, "set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, stood; and they are there," says the sacred historian, "unto this day;" and then again, in the immediate view of his death, after calling the whole house of Israel around him, and binding them anew in a covenant of everlasting allegiance to God, he consecrates and seals the memory of the event by a similar impressive memorial:—"And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of the Lord, and took a great stone and set it up under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord, and Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us ; it shall be therefore a witness unto you lest ye deny your God." And just to quote one other instance, it was on the same

principle, and guided by the same holy impulse, that Samuel, in a signal crisis of his nation's history, erected that stone of remembrance, the name of which has ever since been a household word in the family of God :—"Then Samuel took a stone, and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it EBENZER, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

There is a great principle involved in all these cases,—a principle lying deep alike in the constitution of man's nature, and in the economy of divine providence. Events are the great educators of nations, stamping their impress deep on a people's inmost being, and thus imparting to them a distinctive character which endures for ages. They are at once the awakeners of its life, and its aliment and sustenance from generation to generation. Each subsequent age kindles its spirit at those old watch-fires of the past, which in that land, and for that people, burn on for ever. What were England without the memory of its Magna Charta and Runnymede, or Scotland without

its Bannockburn and its Solemn League ? These, more than even our noble literature, with the one exception of the English Bible,—more than all the appliances of our colleges and schools, have contributed under God to make our country what it is—have breathed into our people that strong and earnest spirit which has made us honoured and feared throughout the world. Hence the importance to a people of the perpetual remembrance of the more stirring and eventful scenes in their history, and the divine wisdom of that deep instinct which prompts us by every available means, to preserve and consecrate the memory of the past. It is perhaps in accommodation to this very principle, that God himself has so ordered it in his providence, that many of the most memorable events affecting the interests and the destinies of man, should have taken place amid scenes which are themselves fitted to constitute the sublime and lasting memorials of the transactions of which they have been, as it were, the witnesses. “Mountains,” says one, “are *nature’s monuments;*” and

certainly it is remarkable how many of those transactions which are of everlasting remembrance, are indissolubly associated with such scenes—as the descent of the ark on Ararat, the giving of the law on Horeb, the grand primeval contest between truth and error on Carmel, and then, in later times, the undying glories of Tabor, of Olivet, of Calvary,—as if God had purposely reared those rocky structures as the perpetual memorials of His mightiest deeds, and consecrated them to all time as the grand Ebenezers of the human race, and of the Church of God.

Now, every family has its history as well as every nation; and that history exercises an influence equally important in moulding the character, and shaping the destiny of its members. There are within the narrow circle of each domestic group, events, eras, stirring scenes, which constitute to them a history as profoundly interesting as are to a people the most thrilling pages in their public annals. That history has its chronicles, chiefly written

in the family Bible,—its illustrative literature, embodied in the free and all-confiding correspondence of its members,—and its monuments, chiefly to be seen in the family burial ground; and the events and the scenes which these commemorate sink into the hearts of all, and wield an influence over them throughout all their future lives. Of this history, and of the precious use that may be made of it by a wise and godly parent, I propose to speak briefly in a few concluding words.

Every history has its *historic events*, its *historic days*, its *historic scenes and localities*; it is so also in the simple annals of each domestic group.

There are *historic events*—of what kind the memory of every one will tell. They form the most interesting and tender remembrances of early days, to which the heart ever anew recurs with a fresh and pensive pleasure. They lie far back amid the scenes of childish and boyish days, and yet they stand out bright and vivid as ever, for the light of the morning sun is on

them. The time when your little brother was born, and you were all taken to church to see him given to God; or the time—how well you remember it—when your little sister, your companion and playmate, was taken away, and you walked beside the tiny coffin in your father's hand to the fresh-opened grave; or the time when your elder sister lay pale and weak on her dying bed, and she gathered you all about her, and told you she was not afraid to die, for that Jesus was with her, and besought you all, one by one, to flee to Him and be saved; or the time when your eldest brother started, amid the admiration and wonder of all the household, with his great-coat, and his hat, and his trunk, for the college, or a mercantile house in the distant city; or the time when the first domestic marriage turned the whole of the little world upside down; or the time—was there ever such a time?—when first you felt yourself a lost sinner, and you gave yourself to Christ, and with beating heart you for the first time took your place, beside grey-

haired Christians, at the communion table ; or when your father or your mother died, and at a stroke the vision of life vanished, and the world stretched out as a naked, desolate, wilderness before you:—such are the events which, endlessly varied, make up the simple but touching memorabilia of each domestic history, and leave their deep and lasting traces on the hearts of the children. It is these things which, of all natural influences, contribute most powerfully to make us what we are, to soften or harden our hearts, to fill them with vanity, or lead them to God. See, then, that such events be improved. Seek to have them sanctified and blessed of God. While the feeling they excite is fresh, strive to turn the stream into a holy channel,—to redeem the passing emotion as an instrument of lasting good. Let the spirit of love and prayer brighten and hallow all. Then shall each transient incident yield, ere it pass, its meed of blessing ; and when in after years the scenes of the past recur to mind, they shall come not alone, but fraught

with all the fragrant memory of sacred lessons learned, and precious impressions received in early and happy days. Thus the buried scenes of the past shall live again, and “though dead yet speak” in melting power to the heart.

Then there are *historic days*—grand domestic commemorations which, within that little world, are as important as the most stirring national anniversaries in the great world without. Such are new year's days, and birth days, of father, or mother, or children. Each has its place of honour in the domestic calendar, and renews, at each annual return, its feast of joy. And surely it is right that it should be so. It is meet that, on such occasions, they should “make merry and be glad.” The peaceful close of another year, or the arrival of parent or child in health and safety at another stage in life's chequered course, is an event not to be thoughtlessly passed over, but signalized by a glad and thankful Ebenezer. Such celebrations, too, are in their influence most salutary. They break the dull

monotony of life, form happy eras in the memory, and awaken and cherish the best affection. Who is there that does not delight to recall, from the long past, some happy Christmas tide, when all the scattered members of the fast dissolving group were gathered once again around the paternal hearth, and when the biting blast and driving storm heard without only rendered the more blessed the glow of heart within; when the "big ha' Bible" was brought out once more, and all knelt together as of old at the common throne of grace?—who is there that can forget such a day? or, who that remembers it, would relinquish the memory for all the joys the wide world can give? Let such days, then, be duly kept, honoured, signalized; but, most of all, one other more sacred and precious still—the holy Sabbath of God. Let it, too, be a great festal day in your family life. Strive to make it a happy day to your children—a day "most calm, most bright," in their feelings and their memories.*

* The author of the following hymn, a great favourite

Be full of holy expedients to endear it to their hearts—reserve for it your calmest smile and gentlest words, and distinguish it by some special enjoyment, which they may look forward to through the week, and learn to associate with the “day which the Lord hath made.” Let them feel that, on this day, the Sun of Righteousness has indeed arisen, and, by his healing beams, chaseth the dark shadows of earth away. Thus, in after years, they may still continue to love it and hold it sacred, as their mother’s grave; and it may be that, in a day of grace, the love of “the Lord’s day”

with some children of my acquaintance, seems to have understood this principle well:—

“ Come, come my little sister, it is Sunday to-day,
We’ll put away our play-things, and forget about our
play,
And then we’ll run to mother dear, and ask if she will
look
For a very pretty story out of her Bible Book.
Perhaps ’twill be of Moses, hid away when he was born;
Or about that wicked Pharaoh, or Joseph and the corn
Or Daniel in the lion’s den, or Jonah in the sea;
Or the pretty little Samuel, beside his mother’s knee;
Or Elijah fed by ravens, and taken up to heaven;

may be made the instrument in God's hand in leading them to the saving knowledge and love of the Lord himself.

Of *historic scenes* and *places* we might have much to say. Every family has its own spots,—it may be bare and uninteresting in a stranger's eye, but dear and sacred to them. They are charmed spots, over which the spirit of the past seems ever to linger, and to whisper solemn things of the days gone by. They live within the heart; they shine in vivid freshness before the mind's eye, as the scene of all that was most precious and blessed in early years. The

Or Jesus coming down to die, that we might be forgiven,
And rising from the grave again, they could not make
Him stay,

And this is why we read of Him, and think of Him
to-day.

And then we'll kneel at mother's knee, and say a little
prayer,

For we know that Jesus is in heav'n, and He can hear
us there.

Come, little brother, will you go and look for mother too,
For 'tis a happy Sunday, and she has no work to do."

From "*A Mother's Gift*," published by J. Groom,
Birmingham.

house in which we were born, the school to which we ran in the glad days of boyhood, the green path to the house of God, the family pew, the mossy gravestones, the field, the bridge, the stream, the smiling hedgerow, each single bush and tree in the family garden, the very shadows on the green lawn—all imprint themselves like a sun-picture within the breast of every child that issues from that little homestead, and are carried with him wherever in the wide world he bends his course. And among these are some spots peculiarly sacred—the room where your mother prayed—the shady walk where you overheard your father's voice in ejaculatory supplication—a favourite sister's grave—the spot where you got the parting blessing, and bid farewell to all you loved at your first outset into the world—the place, if there be such a place, where you first felt the blessedness of communion with God, these are the very Bethels and Ebenezers of your soul, around which memory loves to linger, and of which you could

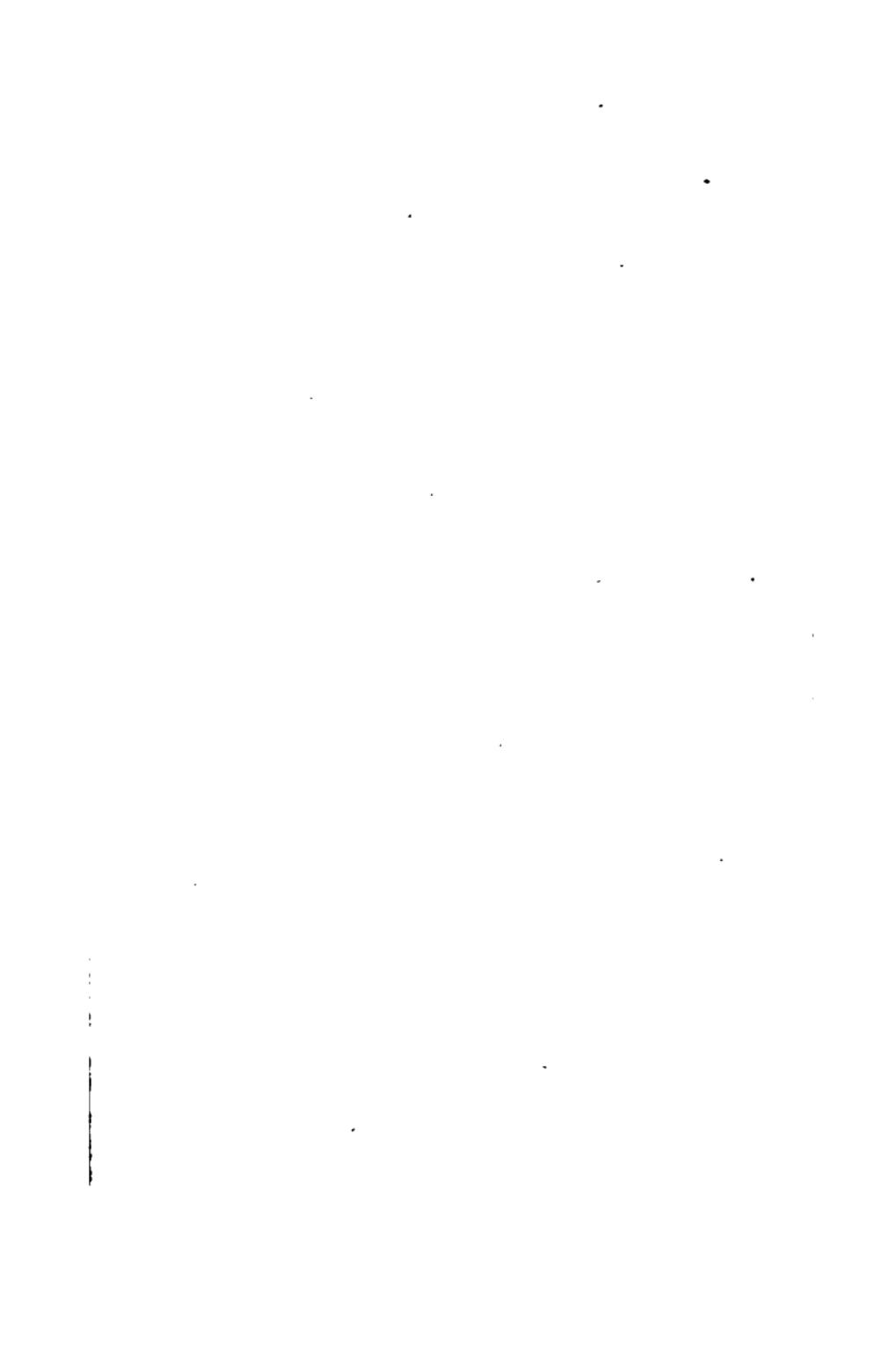
almost say, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." And, surely, the influence of such well-remembered scenes cannot but be great. Such spots are haunted ground, and ever, as you tread them anew, the buried memories of the past start up around your footsteps, and speak in words of power to your heart. Surely it is of vast importance what kind of memories these shall be—what those thoughts, feelings, affections, remembrances are, that are to be for ever linked in the minds of your children with those scenes which they shall always remember—which they shall never be able to forget. O see that yours be such a home, that the more it is remembered, the better shall it be for those that remember it; that never, in after days, any of its inmates may, in body or in spirit, revisit it, without feeling that he is on holy ground—that it is to him as the house of God and the gate of heaven.

And now our brief domestic history is done.

After all, these are but natural influences. As such they are most precious and powerful, but they are nothing more. They cannot change the heart—they cannot convert the soul. Not all the memories of the holiest home on earth can of themselves win the heart for God. Even this best of all charmers will not charm the evil spirit away, let it charm never so wisely. A mightier agent must interpose—a mightier voice must speak. Honour means then, and improve them to the utmost; wield with all your might the sacred influences committed to your hands, but ever look above them, and beyond them, to a sovereign God of grace. Join prayer and pains unremittingly together. Make your children happy; make them busy, active, useful; seek by precept and example to make them holy; let yours be in every sense, so far as you can make it, a blessed home to them,—a home which they may never afterwards remember without having their best affections quickened, their holiest resolutions

confirmed. Yet still, when you have done all, feel that you can do nothing, and plead in unceasing prayer for that saving grace whereby alone "all old things shall pass away, and all things shall be made new."

FINIS.



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